Building Foundations for Freedom:
OTI Country Programs

There is a hush in the streets. The sounds of war—the bark of machine guns, the whistle of artillery, and the rumbling of tanks—are gone for now. Peace has been declared, and the people are cautiously optimistic. Perhaps food will be easier to get. Perhaps they will have, for the first time, a government that works for them, not against them. But already there are rumors that a faction of the former rebel army refuses to accept the settlement. They are mostly young soldiers who have known war all their lives; they are afraid of change. Can the new government really bring peace and stability?

Years of civil conflict, corrupt and autocratic rule, and social and economic instability—these feature prominently in the countries where OTI works. The transitional challenges faced by these nations are enormous and will take years to overcome. OTI's objective is to serve as a catalyst in this process. It helps to make seemingly impossible issues addressable, kick-starting progress toward sustainable development, a more vibrant civil society, and democratic governance.

Transitions can be dangerous times. Expectations tend to skyrocket, and there are almost always groups or individuals who feel their interests are not adequately addressed or are actually threatened by a new regime. Unless a newly-formed government can quickly demonstrate its effectiveness and ability to provide immediate improvements to citizens' quality of life, public discontent can set the stage for further instability and renewed conflict. If they are able to harness enough discontent, spoilers can destroy a hard-won peace and derail a fledgling government.

Yet windows of opportunity for positive change are also more numerous during transitions. New choices can be made, new policies formulated, and new economic opportunities created. OTI quickly assesses the rhythm of a transition and the scale of the challenges. It develops activities that create momentum for change and increase confidence so that peace and democratic progress can be sustained. It works to strengthen basic freedoms: the ability of citizens to speak out, to gather together, to enjoy freedom of movement.

Countries can move toward a path of political and socioeconomic development that will transform their societies. This will entail journeying through unfamiliar, sometimes arduous political terrain. It is a journey that can only be completed by the leaders and citizens of a nation, but it is OTI's privilege to help during the first critical steps.

OTI COUNTRY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

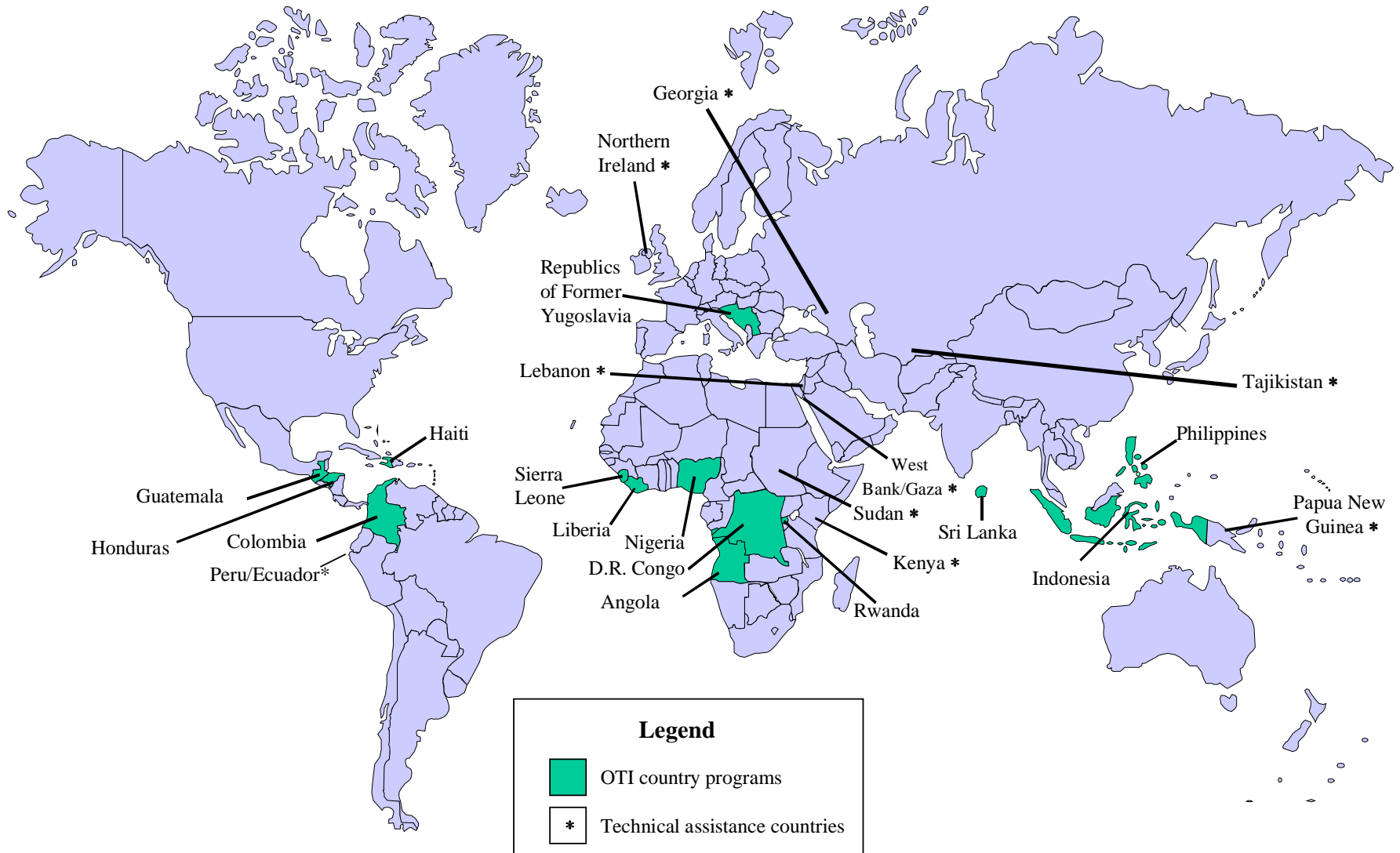| COUNTRY	DATE	PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIVITIES	FY 1997 Funds obligated ($000) [1]	FY 1998 Funds obligated ($000) [1]
ANGOLA	FY 1994 - 1999	**Introduce a measure of hope and stability** • Reducing mine accidents through mine action programs for 2 million Angolans • Promoting 540 local self-help projects in over 300 communities • Enabling the flow of objective news and information by supporting VOA programming for Angolans		$5,118
COLOMBIA	FY 1999	**Provide crucial support to advance peace process** • Restoring confidence in the government by providing municipal-level resources to neglected communities • Helping local governments and communities identify and implement projects that respond to citizens' needs	$0 [2]	$0 [2]
DROC (CONGO)	FY 1997 –	**Assist the transition from an authoritarian regime toward democratic governance** • Assisting participatory decision-making processes at the local level with over 70 grants worth $1.6 million • Supporting dialogues on national reconciliation at 5 provincial reconstruction conferences	$1,069	$7,207
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA	FY 1995 –	**Stimulate democratic change in attitudes and behaviors** • Supporting 150 civil society organizations with 500 grants to promote democratic practices • Disseminating objective information by supporting 3 independent newswire services, 31 independent newspapers and news magazines, 55 independent TV and radio stations • Rebuilding local infrastructure through participatory action	$11,120	$10,917
GUATEMALA	FY 1997 – 1999	**Assist the peace process by helping to reduce the army and demobilize and incorporate the rebel forces** • Assisting the planning, design, and equipping of 8 demobilization camps • Funding literacy, civic education, and vocational training for 2,940 rebel ex-combatants and 953 military ex-combatants • Providing training scholarships for 2,466 ex-combatants • Supporting economic integration activities for rebel ex-combatants	$4,706	$2,031
HAITI	FY 1994 – 1997	**Support the post-conflict transition toward democratic governance** • Funding vocational training for 4,867 former members of the armed forces • Funding 2,363 quick impact projects in 122 communities • Providing training to 1,500 newly elected municipal and local representatives	$1	$0
HONDURAS	FY 1999	**Provide critical resources to the USG relief and reconstruction efforts** • Funding an emergency housing project for 2,000 flood-victim families • Repairing rural infrastructure in strategic areas • Initiating an anti-corruption effort between donors and the government of Honduras	$0 [2]	$0 [2]

OTI COUNTRY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

COUNTRY	DATE	PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIVITIES	FY 1997 Funds obligated ($000) [1]	FY 1998 Funds obligated ($000) [1]
INDONESIA	FY 1998 –	**Advance the debate on the political transition process toward genuine democratic governance** • Increasing the participation of grassroots organizations in the voter education process (21 elections-related grants) • Supporting the capacity of 23 civil society organizations to mobilize peaceful political participation • Increasing capacity of media to cover political process by training 50 radio stations and producing 12 PSAs (18 media-related grants) • Improving relations between civilian and military organizations	$0	$4,799
LIBERIA	FY 1996 – 1999	**Enhance security and democratic processes** • Supporting the demobilization and reintegration of ex-fighters through creation of 10,000 jobs • Creating alternative news outlets and supporting objective information on 8 radio stations; 2,640 wind-up radios distributed • Supporting economic reform efforts by funding national bank audit	$1,715	$419
NIGERIA	FY 1998 –	**Sustain the current transition toward national reconciliation and a democratic government** • Training for 10,300 recently elected political representatives • Providing seed capital for a development fund in the Delta region • Engaging civil society and the government on civil-military reform issues	$0	$39 [2]
PHILIPPINES	FY 1997 –	**Reinforce a struggling peace process** • Assisting the reintegration of 4,000 ex-combatants and their families through economic and social development projects • Providing training on ways to enhance community participation	$867	$1,566
RWANDA	FY 1994 – 1999	**Assist processes to build confidence and trust** • Addressing post-genocide justice issues by sponsoring a conference on genocide law and funding U.N. War Crimes Tribunal activities • Encouraging increased participation of women's associations in community decisions with 1,600 grants to over 1,450 associations • Assisting efforts to empower local government structures	$3,798	$1,223
SIERRA LEONE	FY 1996 –	**Promote political and economic reform and reconciliation** • Assisting civil society and government to build consensus on key issues (410 local leaders participated in reconciliation workshops; 76 village peace committees met on reconciliation) • Engaging civil society participation in advancing a negotiated end to war, and creating an enabling environment for reconciliation and reintegration of fighters	$2,774	$114
SRI LANKA	FY 1997 – 1998	**Assist in the transition toward development in a key area of conflict** • Supporting the re-equipment of Jaffna Technical College, benefiting over 600 students	$220	$253

[1] *Amounts shown include current year appropriated funds carried over from prior fiscal years and resources transferred to OTI from other parts of USAID or other U.S. government agencies.*
[2] *FY 1999 New Country Program.*

[3] *Close to $2 million is being de-obligated because renewed fighting prevented implementation of some activities.*

OTI at a Glance:
Country Activities Worldwide

Georgia *

Northern
Ireland *

Republics
of Former
Yugoslavia

Lebanon *

Tajikistan *

Haiti

Guatemala

Philippines

Sierra
Leone

West
Bank/Gaza *

Honduras

Colombia

Liberia

Nigeria

Sudan *

Sri Lanka

Papua New
Guinea *

Peru/Ecuador*

D.R. Congo

Kenya *

Angola

Indonesia

Rwanda

Legend

OTI country programs

* Technical assistance countries

SEIZING WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY: OTI COUNTRY SELECTION PROCESS

Before engaging in a country or region, OTI considers whether it can play a pivotal role in the transition. Funding levels are relatively modest, so programs must be carefully targeted for high impact. OTI poses five questions in determining whether to engage:

- *Is the country significant to U.S. national interests?* OTI programs are aligned with foreign policy objectives and priorities set by the secretary of state. Though many transitions might benefit from OTI's assistance, funding constraints require that we focus on countries of strategic importance to the United States. Humanitarian concerns also play an important role in engagement decisions.

- *Is the situation ripe for OTI assistance?* This question considers whether a country is in a phase of transition where OTI programming can help forward peaceful change. Typically, an event has occurred—an election, a peace accord, or some other settlement—that signals movement away from conflict or instability and toward more stable, democratic governance.

- *Is the operating environment stable enough for OTI's programs to be effective?* All conflict-prone environments present significant safety risks, but a modicum of security must exist for OTI to work effectively. When security conditions threaten the safety of reform-minded citizens or field staff, OTI will not engage until a more conducive security environment is established.

- *Can OTI address the key political development issues of a transition?* Countries enter transitions from many different starting points. OTI analyzes the political context to determine whether windows of opportunity exist for accelerating progress toward peace and stability. It asks whether its core programming strengths—promoting democracy and enhancing security—can help address the root causes of conflict or instability.

- *How likely is it that program implementation will result in a successful outcome?* Most transitions are volatile. Post-conflict environments can be especially unpredictable, sometimes shifting suddenly in a direction that makes implementing programs difficult or impossible. OTI carefully considers the myriad factors and forces that might affect its activities, and decides to invest based on the likelihood of progress.

In answering these questions, OTI elicits information from a wide range of sources. It draws on the knowledge of country experts, non-governmental organizations, other donors, and U.S. government intelligence sources. It also conducts an extensive review of academic journals, books, reports, and studies.

Additional perspectives inform the final decision. OTI confers with other offices within USAID, including regional bureaus, missions, and the offices of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace. Discussions are also held with other parts of the U.S. government, such as the National Security Council, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense.

As part of the decision-making process, OTI conducts an in-depth field assessment as a basis for potential program strategy and design. Part of this assessment involves taking an inventory of all available in-country resources: Is there a USAID mission? Are American troops present? Is there an international peacekeeping force? Are other donors either interested in or actively implementing programs? What kind of local organizations and capacities exist?

Immediately upon entering a country, OTI begins formulating an exit strategy, an important component of which involves forging partnerships and creating synergies with other donor programs. This not only leverages funding and magnifies program impact, it also lays the groundwork for "handing-off" OTI-initiated activities to other investors—both local and international—to maintain the momentum for change.